

Dublin 7th of January - 1861

Dear Mr May

I recd your long letter today. In a letter
forwarded a few days ago my son enclosed a
statement which I hope will enable us to clear
accounts. I shall therefore wait till I hear from
you again before referring to them and will turn
it over to the chief topics of your painfully inter-
esting epistle.

Of late years I have come to the conclusion that it
would be unwise to have a pretty good share of
subterfuge. It is like a good coat to a man back in
cold weather. Very few ^{of us} have many who think as
we half as much about us as we do about ourselves. Every
time I walk on crowded streets I pass hundreds whom I
don't know - have never seen before - may never see again.
~~A~~ ~~And~~ I care very little about them except in a
general & not very complimentary way. Each one of
this multitude is as full of himself, his plans, his family,
his friends, his ideas, as I am of mine. To fully realize
our individual insignificance would be almost enough
to drive us into a lunatic asylum. As with indi-
viduals so in a great degree with nations. From the
letter I have had within ^{the past} week from Caroline
Winter, J. W. McKim & yourself ~~today~~ it may be
gathered that whatever America's shortcomings may be
ours are ten times blacker - that our sins are far
worse than ours without half the temptation.

As to this Trent affair I am told that Thurlow
Wood who is now in London has expressly admitted in
a letter to the Times that "the bottom had fallen out
of the best precedent" by which that act was attempted
to be defended in the United States. I do not believe
that it does to take you at a disadvantage had
the remonstrances with the almost unani-
mous disapprobation with which followed the act of
Captain Wilkes - no more whatever. In no other way
could the tenderest point be touched by ~~the English~~
~~people to assist~~ which you could arouse the English
people. On another point are they more lenient than
on that which affects a right of abode for English land
English ships. I believe that 19 out of every 20
if we would rather the capture had been
any one else than Southern Commodore. That
Mason & Slidell were the men was generally
felt to be a drawback to the general determination
to stand by the honor of the flag. As to taking you at
a disadvantage ^{when} ~~you~~ ~~thought~~ ~~as~~ ~~certainly~~ ~~that~~
~~that~~ ~~as~~ ~~deliberately~~ ~~used~~, do you really
think that your having acted so while you had another
ground on your hand was a good reason why we should
submit to it without remonstrance? You remember
that when we were hard pressed during the Mexican war,
you insisted on the removal of Sir John Lambton because
he was in some degree implicated in an attempt to
obtain recruits in the United States. It was uni-
versally felt then that the conduct of the U. S. govern-
ment was offensively haughty, overbearing, & intention-
ally humiliating to us. Our government has so often
succumbed in this way from a dislike to a quarrel
with you that on every side it was generally
attributed to fear & a notion that without your

Altho' your own, I saw dollars as felt that
 we must cease to exist. Nothing like your hatred to
 England, the all pervading dislike of England & every
 thing belonging to her which with you is a popular
 superstition ~~which is as~~ ^{as} ~~breathes~~ ^{any}
 existence here. We think that the American
 nation is bountiful & has an extraordinary idea
 of its own gifts, power, & destiny that
 it is freer, happier, better, more enlightened than any
 other. Their notions are generally regarded as
~~unjustified~~ ^{unjustified} ~~opinions~~ ^{opinions} ~~of the~~ ^{of the} ~~country~~ ^{country} &
 the ~~best~~ ^{best} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~people~~ ^{people} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~world~~ ^{world}
 measuring them selves with other nations. Whether we
 are right in holding such opinions it is certain that
 no such national antipathy existed here ~~as~~ ^{as}
 your nation held at present. It has been felt as a
 fortune & utterly unrecalled for insult that such men
 as Leonard & W. Phillips should talk of annexing
 Canada. It is not in the spirit of America that the
 troops were sent to Canada after the Trent affair.
 We did not know how your government would regard
 our interpretation of it. Had Canada should be
 left defenceless, it was perfectly right that we
 should send troops out. We have as good a right
 to send 20,000 troops to our territory as you have
 to keep 500,000 in your own land. I have no
 question that any application that may be made
 has been made by England in this matter with

4)

stated

be ~~in~~ with an anxious desire to avoid any
~~most~~ giving offence & to prevent the danger of
 war. The public acts of our statement are now
 shaped for widely popular ends and are liable
 to be severely criticised - and any haste or precipi-
 tancy which would lead to a war with America
 would be ~~glorious~~ ~~unpleasant~~ as our cowardly
 submission would certainly be. I find in the
 letters of my American friends that the idea of
 our "wanting a war" is repeatedly suggested. Now we
 know how much war costs in blood & treasure
 - we know to improve trade it is a blinding remedy
 - and therefore a general policy of satisfaction
 exists in the prospect of peace which we have
 before us.

However the ~~abolition~~ abolition of slavery may
 result from this civil war it is really most
 puzzling to know what to deduce from even
 the abolition newspapers. Such dissensions in
 the cabinet - such contrary views ~~among~~ ~~among~~ the
 the part of the generals - some for - some against
 slavery - such demands for "conservative" caution
 on the part of the editors - such declarations that
 the war is for the Union - not for abolition. All
 this is most confusing & embarrassing & wees that
 allowance should be made for us here when we
 are unable to that which may appear clear
 to you. The American proclivity to angles & find
 us seem to me nearly the same whether
 the aggression comes from our side as in the
 case of the supposed interference with the slave
 the ships - or from yourselves as in the real affair.
 We are equally wrong whatever we do. This is too bad.

MS. B. 1.6 v. 15, p. 43

You presently name me along with
James Haughton & Eliza Wigham as if ~~we~~ we
~~mean~~ always coincide in our view of American
affairs. This is not so. It would not offend
me if any one were to place a much higher
estimate upon either of these truly good people
than upon me. But I am no non-resistant.
I regard non-resistance as a dream - as utterly
inconsistent with the existence of man in a
social state. Eliza Wigham is, I imagine, a
non-resistant, while James Haughton is pretty much
the same, being so peace-at-any-price. If I had
been an American non-resistant, I am not so ab-
surd as to think I should have been more con-
sistent than such men as Garrison, Whipple,
A. C. Wright & the like. Where they saw war, I
should most certainly not have stood my ground.
All I maintain is, that in giving non-resistance the
soby, ^{that} to avoid being helped to Jefferson Davis, they
~~forced~~ the improbability of carrying out the doctrine
to its full results. I don't blame them at all,
though I cannot defend their consistency.

My theory is that when the abolitionists joined
in ~~the~~ the cry for the maintenance of the union,
they meant a Union free from Slavery, while the
greater portion of their countrymen would have
gladly hailed its restoration, with Slavery, if the
Southern had ^{only} withheld their opposition. I also
think if the North (as most in England hoped, & as
the Northerners themselves fully expected previous
to the Battle of Bull Run) had been rapidly
successful in subduing the South, an attempt wd
have been made to patch up the old compact on the
old basis - & most likely a successful attempt.

Judging from the preponderance of extracts from
your papers, ^{given} in the Standard & Liberator I would
judge that the utter abolition of slavery is far
more beloved as a principle to the Northern mind —
that such difficulty is felt as to the disposal of
the slaves, ~~the~~ ^{the} great repugnance to the idea of
social equality with them, ^{that} a general notion prevails
that the ^{whole} community is more comfortable with them
as slaves than as free men. My own belief is
that if they were fairly treated & fairly paid, there
would be no more difficulty with the 4 millions
of American emancipated than there was with
them in the British West Indies where every
thing that impeded the complete success of
the experiment was caused by the avarice
& tyranny of the brutal owners. Mr. Brewster shows
this very clearly. So does John Abbott in his "South & North".
There is one point on which we, as far as
know the persons of the North & of Great Britain
are diametrically opposite. I mean the chance
of your being able to put down the Slave States
so effectually, as to be able secure the ^{speedy} abolition
of slavery. As the 3 millions of the 13 colonies
defeated England as there are 10 mil & secured
their own independence — so I fear the 8 or 9
millions of the North, animated with equal
determination & as bitter hostility, with
intendant the strength of the North, whose chief
animating principle is union (under an equal,
free, & republican government) with men & women
who cordially hate them — ~~the~~ ^{are} who hold their slaves
securely in their power, & scattered over an area
of territory as large as some of the great European
empires. It is not 50 years since the last relics
of a system like slavery disappeared from free England.

An old school fellow of mine is Matthew Pim,
 now a wealthy merchant of great intellectual,
 literary, commercial, & administrative ability,
 who has one of the clearest, most impartial &
 most judicial heads I have any knowledge of.
 We occasionally talk ~~unreservedly~~ about Amer-
 ican affairs, and when I read & admired extracts
 from your letter to Miss Estlin & me in ~~your~~ the
 last "Advocate", I showed him your last letter &
 now ~~enclose~~ ^{of his} comments ~~of his~~ up on the contents,
 in which I entirely coincide.

In reference to the extract from the Times
 which some friends of yours were represented to
 you, my son Richard has found & copied the
 passage. It is this:—"But, General Scott this
 " friends at home must be prepared to accept as
 " international law not what we or others have
 " done in old times, but what we should be per-
 " mitted ourselves to do in the present day."—Dec. 5.

I agree with you that it would be very vain for
 us to make your difficulty our opportunity. But
 in acting as he did, Captain Wilkes could not have
 in any way more effectually aroused the indig-
 nation of the English people, who cared nothing
 for Mason & Slidell—but are above all things
 sensitive to any attempt to invade the right of
 asylum conferred by ^{inherent in their} ~~the~~ ~~convention~~ ~~as the~~
~~soil~~ ~~the~~ flag. The sentiment was as unanimously ex-
 pressed as I ever remember—and it would
 have been the same if France or any other
 great power had been the perpetrator. The feeling
 I am firmly persuaded had nothing to do with
 hostility to America—or with slavery or anti-slavery.

The New York Herald says, "let us give up Maine
"I decide now: when we shall have settled our private
"matters, we can open an account with Great
"Britain." From here say in reply: "Very well,
if we must have war, we may as ^{well} have it now
as at any other time." But the general
feeling is one of satisfaction when the mainte-
nance of peace seems likely, & vice versa. We
know that war deranges trade, wastes the public
& private property, destroys life & is generally to be
avoided. Our rulers are not likely to wish
for war - but if they had not shown themselves
prompt to demand explanation respecting the
Kent affair, they would have been promptly cashiered.
But ~~strong~~ ^{strong} as was the manifestation of public
feeling, no less universal was the disposition to
await the decision of the ^{our} principal law officers
as to the legality of the act. If they had said it was
legally justifiable, no more would have been said
about it.

Whatever the language of English journals, in
my opinion that of ours has been far
more coarse, insulting & exasperating. In forming
an opinion on national affairs & relations, the
talk of ~~journalists~~ irresponsible & self-seeking
journalists should be left as far as possible
~~unnoticed~~ unnoticed - and detection should be
chiefly drawn from the language & acts of the
government. As far as I have heard ours has
acted all along with decency & moderation.
I had a letter in my hand yesterday from a noble
man of high rank who has held a high position in
our government in which he declares that our national
opinion on the Kent affair was expressed with caution & courtesy.

MS. B.1.6 v.115, p.63

Supplement of Second to C.70

9
You contrast the admissions of American
slaveholders & abolitionists by slavery into high
circle of English society in comparison with the
coldness & indifference shown to your abolition
missionaries. Mr. Paine agrees with me that the
entree into ~~the~~^{our} somewhat fastidious & exclusive
circles of social circle in high life depends
more upon introduction & manners than upon
the moral certainties of the bearers. All doors
flew open to Mr. How's genius & Charles Sumner's
accomplished refinement. The abolitionists, as
such have generally gone to those who were pre-
pared to receive them & these have been by no
means of a high rank themselves. Many of
the abolitionists have been rather rough hearted
men, ~~therefore~~ not suited to make their way
in polished circles. You know I have never
claimed any great merit for the cause of English-
men & still less for Irishmen. They have never
attained to much more than a negative, skin deep
~~self~~ anti-slavery - little suited to contend with
the zealous American penulancy propa-
ganda which has been poured in upon us.
All I maintain is that for what there is wrong among
us there is an easy, a natural & a reasonable
explanation - while I by no means condemn the
total depravity, the proneness to take the bad
side which you seem to ~~impute to us~~^{impute to us}. ~~What~~^{What} you
admit of the weak conduct of your own government,
from what I see ~~from~~ⁱⁿ the abolition papers of the mass
of American penulancy sentiment comes in the per-
tinent ~~the~~^{the} ~~success~~^{success} difficulty of knowing what to
think of the course of your affairs ~~it is most~~^{it is most} natural
that people here should ~~be~~^{be} puzzled to know
how to choose between the two sides in your struggle.

All that you say against the South I fully
admit. I quite agree with. But remember
that the majority here are generally extremely
ignorant of particulars — We hear very little
of the state of affairs in the South — while ~~it~~
from the North comes a tariff prohibitory of
our manufactures, from the North we hear of
threats to annex Canada — from the Northern
papers issued at the turn-out of your own
struggle with the rebellion, come insulting &
bullying articles in newspapers directed against
England. No people would have exacted more from
England & despised ~~her~~^{us} more if we had quietly
submitted to Captain Wilkes, than those of the Free States.

Why cannot you look upon your own acts in the light in which you would have viewed them if committed by others against you? This is what no American seems capable of doing. If they did, the whole dispute would have a very different aspect.

It is easier of as great an amount as we
can put into words that the American Brew
as expressed by Caroline Weston, in the Kin
yourself in your letters to me should be (as
they seem to us) so surprisingly one-sided that
all the wrong doing seems to be on all the
part of the suffering Yemas.

I am as confident as I can be of any thing that was is here looked on with repulsion by 19 out of 20 thinking men; except on the ground that you think us afraid of you, that you think we can do without you, that you are determined to give us a thrashing before long because we are impatient of a free insult & injury now, & that if we must fight we may as ^{well} do so now as at any other time. Still the prospect is extremely distasteful, may be hateful to our people.

11
Miss Watson who expresses herself with all a clever
woman's partisan vehemence, dwells upon the foolish
speech of a foolish young Englishman who ~~he~~ observed
on the recent affairs "how we have caught the Yankees
at last" - and of others who say that our country is
"too large". Now how can any moderately sensible
person feel surprise if there should be, in so dense,
& so composite a population as ours, people who
with or without thought will say all sorts of things?
And to speak of historians, if ^{any} individual's peace of
mind depended on his having some particularly
good natured curators of his reputation ~~speeches of~~
~~speeches~~ who were ready to tell him every thing that
others said about him, I ask you what mood that
poor fellow's state of mind be? Why of course he
would be hurt, indignant, angry, mortified. His life
would be miserable. Just such a kind friend's part
is perpetually played by the Free Press in both countries,
and unquestionably it is not by any means an
unqualified blessing. The London Times never
loses a good opportunity to say disagreeable things
of the Irish, attributing to the whole nation the faults
& follies of the most ignorant & most fanatical portion
of our people. Nothing can be more unfeeling or
untrue than their persistent wholesale abuse of
Irishmen. Well, now, this is ~~it~~ a very good reason
for our disliking the Times but not for disliking the
English people - who from the highest to the lowest
are liable to the very same treatment themselves
whenever the editor or his subs have a clever way
they to say which will make people exclaim, as
they cannot help doing, "How very clever the Times
is."

Whether is true of the Times is true of the Herald
which circulates more every day here than in
the war of exchange than any other of your
papers, just as the Times does in America.

We may regret this but we can't help it. The
facts are so, the multitude will be led by the
newspapers. But I think ~~we~~^{we} should not imitate
them. I think we should take broader views, when
coming to conclusions in which nations are concerned
should not decide that 20 millions on one side
are all right & 20 millions on the other side are
wrong - for in doing so we shall surely be mistaken.

Having read Mr Boutwell's & Mr Phillips' speeches
I have been moved to address the enclosed
letter to the Liberator which you will please
offer for insertion & if it is accepted & you
could get the proof carefully read for me I
would be much obliged. When I next hear you
shall have my opinion about Conway's book.

Yours ever affectionately

Richd D Webb